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Medicaid Director lobbies delegation and CMS to improve health in Kansas
Kansas Health Policy Authority meets with Kansas Congressional delegation and CMS on issues affecting Kansas Medicaid and SCHIP beneficiaries

In Washington, D.C. yesterday, Andy Allison, PhD, Acting Kansas Medicaid Director and Deputy Director of the Kansas Health Policy Authority met with the Kansas Congressional delegation to share concerns about new federal requirements for Medicaid and the reauthorization of State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Allison and others from the KHPA, including Executive Director Marci Nielsen, PhD, MPH, met with officials from Centers on Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) earlier in the week to discuss the same issues.

"We're hopeful that the new flexibilities outlined in the President's State of the Union Address, and included in his budget, can help the state succeed in its current efforts to achieve access for all Kansans," said Allison. "Unfortunately, we're also dealing with the challenges imposed by new Federal requirements to document the citizenship and identity of applicants. The timing of these new requirements made it difficult for us to fully respond, and the result is that a large number of Kansans have fallen off the Medicaid caseloads. In fact, many other states have experienced the same steep costs of this legislation. We must work together to find a solution to reduce the number of Kansans that bear these unintentional consequences."

The legislation, requiring proof of identity and citizenship when applying for Medicaid benefits, has had an unexpected negative impact Kansans who need Medicaid services and other health benefits. Between 18,000 and 20,000 Kansans have lost Medicaid benefits as a result of the state's compliance with a new federal law, effective July 1, 2006, which requires many Medicaid applicants to provide documentation to verify their citizenship and identity.

Allison said, "We also expressed in each of these meetings our specific interest in the Congressional reauthorization of SCHIP this year. We are one of 37 states that are not fully funded under the current formula, and will be following federal deliberations very closely to help our delegation understand the issues of importance to the state."

Federal funding for SCHIP will expire in 2007 unless Congress reauthorizes it.

Nielsen and several legislators were not able to meet with the delegation due to weather and airport closures.

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